

## [Letter from Woody Guthrie to Alan Lomax, September 25, 1940]

We're dealing with your mind I suppose when we put on radio programs and talk and sing and when we are honest with ourselves in our entertaining we are honest with you that listen. And if we dont tell exactly whats on our own mind according to where we been and stuff we seen and what we seen that was good and bad and how to make the good gooder and fix the bad, we just well as not put on at all, in fact it would be a whole lot better if we didnt even put on a show because if you see something thats wrong and needs to be fixed, and you get up and tell it just how you feel, that makes you a showman and a good entertainer and all hells crooks and liars cant hold you back, and when the show business is smart enough to let even a little bit of this show through all of the other crap looks just a shade silly and you wonder why they waste electricity on it. You have seen just as great a day and time as the next feller if you only stop for a minute every once in a while to set down, I mean stand up, and think the whole thing over — everything you've lived and seen, and the times and conditions that you have seen and lived through have made you just exactly what you are and if an actor, dancer, artist, or singer, or what not, even a ditch digger, whether you're a good one or not all depends on how hard you work to fix whatever it is you're working at for the folks thats going to get the good of it.

Woody Guthrie 9-25-40 NYC

I might sound like that I'm against book reading but I aint. I've not read so many books. I doubt if I've read a dozen from back to back. But I say dont let books run away with your wagon. They help to show you what other folks has been thinking about and went through and how to talk and use words a little bit better. But in show business other peoples thoughts and what they think are not to come first on your list. I actually believe that most of us under all hard times and all sorts of wars and hungry spells have got just

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about the same idea about it all before we read a book or a newspaper and the thing for you to deliver and parting is what your head registers and what your ears hear and what your eyes feel and what your nose smells and what your likes sat and when you disagree with books and papers or talks or sermons you ought to find yourself a successful way of doing it and a way of putting what you honestly believe into your show. If you dont like murder then dont work for it and if you hate war then dont show for it, but show all you can to end it and if you want a better subject than either one of these to have shows about, what about this one, a job for everybody and a gun for nobody. You cant entertain nobody unless you can do two things be yourself and forget yourself and imagine you're helping everybody, cuss the ones that dont like you, by what you do. There aint no greener or rougher actors than me but I can think about a six hundred mile dust storm and really try and it wasnt me that made them duststorms but the folks that was in them hung me up.

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